

OVERVIEW

Consideration for the adoption of a specific child means that the child's adoption worker will explore the child's relationship with relatives and other families who have a history with the child and/or a relationship that is significant to the child. The family's relationship with the child and their interest in adopting must be documented on the DHS-1926, Preliminary Adoptive Assessment, the BCAL-3130, Initial Foster Home/Adoption Evaluation, or the DHS-612, Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum.

The child placing agency must always seek out appropriate relatives as a foster care placement option when a child is initially removed from the parental home. The child placing agency must also consider relatives at the time the permanency plan becomes adoption. Relatives may be an appropriate placement when they have an established relationship with the child and/or provide a familiar environment for the child.

All children must be placed in accordance with their individual needs, including any special physical, emotional and educational needs; the need to place siblings together; placement with relatives and maintaining continuity of current relationships; see ADM 0300.

Preference in placement practices by race, ethnicity or religion is prohibited. Race and/or ethnicity and/or religion may not be the basis for a delay or denial in the placement of a child. Race and/or ethnicity may be appropriate considerations in evaluating the best interest of an individual child to be matched with a particular family; see ADM 0620.

WHO TO CONSIDER

At the time the child's permanency plan becomes adoption, the supervising agency must consider all the following persons (not in order of preference):

- Relatives with whom the child has an established relationship and those relatives with no prior established relationship that express an interest in adopting the child.
- Current foster parent(s), relative caregiver(s) or court approved unrelated caregiver(s).
- Unrelated persons who have had an established relationship that is significant to the child.

The adoption worker must document which parties have been considered for adoption in the child's case record.

Consideration of Relatives

The definition of relative in MCL 712A.13a includes:

"An individual who is at least 18 years of age and related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, as grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great grandparent, aunt or uncle, great-aunt or great-uncle, great-great-aunt or great-great-uncle, sibling, stepsibling, nephew or niece, first cousin or first cousin once removed, and the spouse of any of the above, even after the marriage has ended by death or divorce".

A child may be placed with the parent of a man whom the court has found probable cause to believe is the putative father if there is no man with legally established rights to the child. A placement with the parent of a putative father under this subdivision is not to be construed as a finding of paternity or to confer legal standing on the putative father.

Foster Care Record Review

The adoption worker must review the foster care record to determine the extent to which relatives were identified and located for foster care placement of the child, including reasons for approving or denying placement. The adoption worker must also review the amount of contact relatives have had with the child over the course of the child's life.

Contact with Birth Parent(s)

An important factor to evaluate in considering a relative as a potential adoptive family for a child is their willingness and ability to assure the physical and emotional well-being of the child on a permanent basis. Relatives must demonstrate ability and willingness to keep the child safe and a commitment to ensure that the child does not experience further emotional or physical harm through placement within the family system.

Consideration of Foster Parents

If a child resides with licensed foster parent(s), the psychological attachment of a child to the foster parents must always be consid-

ered before replacing the child to a different adoptive home. The child's age, developmental stage and frequency and number of replacements must all be considered in relationship to the length of time the child has resided in the foster home.

Consideration of Siblings

When biological siblings are separated in foster care, consideration is to be given to uniting the siblings in an adoptive home unless:

- Doing so is harmful to one or more of the siblings.
- One of the siblings has exceptional needs that can only be met in a specialized program or facility.
- Despite diligent efforts to place the sibling group together, the size of the sibling group makes the placement impractical.

The extent of the consideration must be determined based on the best interest of the child (Such as the strength of the relationships between siblings versus the relationship between the child and other individuals such as the children's current caregivers).

Consideration of Other Approved Families

Consideration of other approved adoptive families may be made if the current caregivers and any identified relatives are no longer considered to be a viable adoptive placement option for the child.

Efforts must be made to locate an approved family using all available resources including all efforts defined in ADM 0400 and ADM 0570. This must include contacting other local DHS adoption programs and contracted adoption agencies serving the area. All efforts to achieve the expected performance outcome of adoptive placement within six months must be made.

PLANNING FOLLOWING A DISRUPTED ADOPTION

Concurrent planning must be used in the placement of a child for whom an adoptive placement has disrupted. It is critical to place the child in a home that may serve as a permanent placement to mini-

mize additional moves. A written permanency plan must be in place for the child within 45 calendar days of the determination that the adoption placement will end. The plan must include therapy and grief work for the child if appropriate. If there is no identified adoptive placement for the child within six months of the change of placement, the child must be photo listed in MARE unless an exception request has been made to the DHS adoption manager in central office. A face-to-face case review must be held at the time of a disrupted adoption and include at a minimum: the current adoption worker, the adoption supervisor and a permanency resource monitor or adoption resource consultant; see ADM 0400 child-specific recruitment requirements. This meeting can be held in conjunction with the FTM for the child's change in placement, if a change of placement occurs at this time.

INTENT TO ADOPT FORM

Within three working days of the assignment of the adoption case-worker, the adoption worker must notify the caregivers with whom the child is placed that the child's permanency plan is adoption. The caregiver's interest in adoption must be documented. Current caregivers should be informed that if the child has a strong bond and psychological attachment, they will be given consideration for adoption of that child. The DHS-4809, Intent to Adopt, must be used for notification. Caregivers must be instructed to return the form to the supervising agency within 14 calendar days of receiving notification to express their interest.

Relatives who previously expressed interest in placement must be contacted and their interest in adopting documented on the DHS-4809, Intent to Adopt.

The DHS-4809 may also be used for families, other than the current caregivers, to document their interest in adoption planning for the child. This may include families who have adopted known siblings if the agency has determined consideration of this family is in the child's best interests.

DHS Publication 538, Michigan's Adoption Subsidy Programs, must be given to prospective adoptive parents with the DHS-4809.

**Review Plan for
Children With An
Identified Adoptive
Family**

A case review is required for children with an identified family when adoptive placement has not been achieved within six months of the family signing the DHS-4809. The schedule of case review meetings is as follows:

- At six and nine months after the DHS-4809 has been signed, a face-to-face case review meeting must occur and include at a minimum: the adoption worker, the adoption supervisor, and the prospective adoptive family.
- In cases where an adoptive placement has not occurred within one year of the DHS-4809 being signed, a case review meeting must occur and include at minimum: the adoption worker, the adoption supervisor, the prospective adoptive family, an outside expert engaged by DHS with expertise in permanency and adoption process and planning. This review must occur between nine and 12 months of the DHS-4809 being signed and must be held on a quarterly basis thereafter until the Order Placing Child After Consent is issued or a goal change occurs. Documentation of these case reviews and efforts to achieve adoption must be maintained in the child's adoption record for review and, upon request, submitted to the Adoption Program Office for review.